

Weekly Flu Cases Hit Record High Again; DPH Reports Five Additional Flu-Related Deaths

DOVER – Single-week totals for flu cases are again hitting record highs. For the week of February 11-18, 2018, the Division of Public Health (DPH) is reporting 1,521 laboratory-confirmed influenza cases. The total number of flu cases for the season is now at 5,758, an all-time high since record-keeping began with the 2004-2005 season. These numbers only reflect only laboratory-confirmed flu cases and the actual number of flu cases in the community is likely much higher.



In addition to the 1,521 new lab-confirmed cases, DPH is also announcing that there have been five more flu-related deaths since February 19. The individuals ranged from 62 to 86 years old and all had underlying health conditions. Three were from New Castle County, one was from Kent County, and one was from Sussex County. These five deaths bring the season total to 23. The most deaths reported in a single season was 28 in 2014-2015.

“I cannot stress strongly enough that people should continue to stay home while sick, contact their doctor at first sign of illness and continue to engage in frequent hand-washing and covering of coughs and sneezes to prevent the spread of the flu virus,” said DPH Director Dr. Karyl Rattay. “Flu is still

very much active in our state.”

If you are sick, do not go to school or work until you are fever-free for 24 hours without fever-reducing medication. Call your primary care provider or visit a walk-in center if you don't have one, as soon as symptoms develop, as they may choose to prescribe antivirals for treatment, without an office visit. Wash your hands frequently and wipe down frequently touched surfaces with soap and water or disinfecting products. Cough or sneeze into tissues or into your inner elbow, if tissues are not available.

Individuals who develop influenza-like-illness symptoms are encouraged to contact their primary care provider (PCP) for treatment recommendations, or visit a walk-in care center if you do not have a PCP, instead of going to the emergency room. People who are extremely ill with symptoms such as trouble breathing, bluish skin color, fever with a rash, dizziness or severe or persistent vomiting should seek out immediate medical help. Your primary care provider may decide to provide antiviral medications to help speed up recovery and prevent serious complications without an in-office visit. DPH asks medical providers to begin antiviral treatment for all hospitalized patients and all high-risk patients with suspected influenza.



Although the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is indicating that the flu season may be peaking at the national level, DPH cannot say whether Delaware has peaked yet.

“Delawareans should not take any initial discussions of flu season peaking nationally as an indicator that they should relax the preventive measures we have been discussing. Flu will continue to circulate widely in our state for weeks to come,” said Dr. Rattay.

Flu activity nationally is higher now than what has been observed at the peak of many seasons, and activity will likely remain high for several weeks to come. Additionally, the CDC and DPH continue to recommend that people who have not done so get the flu vaccine, as there is an increasing proportion of influenza B and A (H1N1) viruses being detected. Even if Delaware starts to see a decline in the number of laboratory-confirmed cases, that may be more the result of reduced testing by physicians as opposed to an actual decline in flu activity.

For more information about flu surveillance in Delaware, read the weekly flu report at <http://dhss.delaware.gov/dph/epi/influenzawkly.html>.

Delaware Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations.